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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

FOR NEA, NEA/ELA, DRL

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [EG](#)

SUBJECT: THE TERROR SUSPECT WHO BEAT HIMSELF TO DEATH: A
TALE OF DETENTION IN EGYPT

REF: A. CAIRO 3184

[1](#)B. CAIRO 2969

Sensitive but unclassified. Please protect accordingly.

[1](#)1. (SBU) On May 22, the Egyptian Public Prosecutor announced that 27-year-old Ashraf Said Youssef, the alleged mastermind behind the April 7 and April 30 terror attacks on tourist sites in Cairo (reftels), died in custody on May 19. According to the GOE announcement, Youssef, who had been captured on April 29, died from self-inflicted injuries sustained after he beat his head against the wall of his detention cell. After sustaining his injuries, Youssef had been admitted to hospital on May 11. The Public Prosecutor's statement noted that he had been "notified by a police report" of Youssef's death and then "decided to reassign the forensic doctor to perform an autopsy to ascertain the injuries that led to his death, and prepare an urgent report on his findings to present it to the public prosecution." As of June 1, the forensic report had not been made public.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Several Egyptian human rights groups, along with a number of independent and opposition newspapers, immediately disputed both the Public Prosecutor's statement and the circumstances surrounding Youssef's death. The Association for Human Rights Legal Aid (AHRLA) characterized the Public Prosecutor's statement as "vague" and questioned why the Public Prosecutor would depend on a police report instead of waiting for the forensic report to be released. The Egyptian Organization for Human Rights (EOHR) issued a statement on May 22 asserting that it has "strong doubts that Youssef's death was not the result of torture or mistreatment." EOHR further asserted that following Youssef's arrest in Menoufiyya governorate, he had no access to counsel, no contact with family, and the authorities had refused to disclose his place of detention. EOHR demanded a full investigation into the incident, the public release of the results, and for "human rights groups and the National Council for Human Rights (NCHR) to be permitted to interview the people who were responsible for the defendant during the period of his preventive detention."

[1](#)3. (SBU) Youssef's death in custody was preceded by the death in custody sometime before April 27 of his cousin, Mohamed Suleiman Youssef, a 40-year-old primary school teacher from Shubra Al-Khayma, who had been arrested in the village of Amar, Qaliyubiyya Governorate, shortly after the April 7 attack. EOHR and other human rights groups had called for an investigation into the circumstances surrounding Mohamed Suleiman Youssef's death in custody. Press accounts indicated that Ashraf Said Youssef learned of his cousin's death on April 27 and decided to expedite planning for additional attacks, which Ashraf initially planned to avenge earlier arrests of other accomplices and/or relatives. Ashraf Said Youssef's arrest on April 29 did not prevent the April 30 attacks from taking place.

[1](#)4. (SBU) Comment: Deaths in custody are not a new phenomenon in Egypt. Over the past five years, at least 44 detainees (including at least 10 in 2004, according to our Human Rights Report) have died in custody, allegedly victims of torture. These two latest deaths in custody call attention, yet again, to the apparent use of brutal interrogation practices by the GOE security services. End comment.

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GRAY